Minnesota School for the Blind

Faribault, Minnesota

Twenty-Ninth Biennial Report

1935-1936

Twenty-Ninth Biennial Report

For the Two Years Ending June 30, 1936

To the State Board of Control

Minnesota School for the Blind

Report of the Superintendent

State Board of Control

L. G. Foley, *Chairman*
C. R. Carlgren
Anna O. Determan
Downer Mullen, *Secretary*

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Foreword

The twenty-ninth biennial report of the Superintendent of the Minnesota School for the Blind to the Members of the State Board of Control is intended to serve as a record of the past two years. It contains information of general interest to the public; specifically it furnishes graduates and former students with supplementary facts.

To the general reader the following information is of interest: The Minnesota School for the Blind will celebrate its seventy-fifth anniversary in 1941; its first class was organized in 1866 with two boys and two girls in attendance. The present school consists of eight buildings and is located on a high bluff overlooking the Straight river and the City of Faribault. The campus proper consists of five acres of lawn, well shaded by giant maples and elms.

The regular school year consists of 180 days of instruction and extends from September to May inclusive; it is open to children, six to twenty-one years of age. Eight weeks of instruction is offered the adult blind during June and July of each summer.

There is no tuition; no charge is made to students for board, room, laundry, text books and ordinary medical services. The facilities of the school are available to the residents of the State of Minnesota whose vision is too defective to make attendance in public school possible.

Officers and Teachers

	1934-1935	1935-1936
Superintendent—	M. R. Vevle (to Nov. 15, 1934)	
	J. C. Lysen (from Nov. 16, 1934)	J. C. Lysen
Secretary—	Kathryn Schlatter	Kathryn Schlatter
Steward—	Anna R. Steppan	F. W. Butterwick
Principal—	B. L. Berhow	B. L. Berhow
Literary Teachers—	Julia Beaumann	Julia Beaumann
	Emeline Brandeen	Emeline Brandeen
	Harold Carey	Harold Carey
	Margaret E. Donohue	Paul Hoff
	Ethel Erickson*	Helen Gunderson
		Adelaide Helppie
	Marie Lien	Marie Lien
	Helen Posz	Helen Posz
	Olive Prine	Olive Prine
	Edna W. Severson	Edna W. Severson
	Clara Zieske	Clara Zieske**
Music Teachers—	Edith Guillemin	Edith Guillemin
	Florence Bieter	Florence Bieter
	Emeline Brandeen	Emeline Brandeen
	M. A. Steppan	M. A. Steppan
Industrial Teachers—	Elizabeth Boody	Torger Lien
	Mabel Bryzel	Mabel Bryzel
	Joseph Grebner	Joseph Grebner
	Halvor Jacobson	Halvor Jacobson
	Marie Lien	Marie Lien
	Augusta Schewe†	Alice Leider
Librarian—	Mary Heenan	Mary Heenan
Physical Training—	F. W. Butterwick	Aksel Nielsen
Physician—	F. U. Davis, M. D.	F. U. Davis, M. D.
Ophthalmologist—	John H. Gammell, M. D.	John H. Gammell, M. D.
Nurse—	Inez Voxman, R. N.	Inez Voxman, R. N.
Housekeeper—	Julia A. Nelson	Julia A. Nelson
Chief Engineer—	Wayne Saarela	Wayne Saarela

*Succeeded by Helen Gunderson, Feb. 1, 1935
**Succeeded by Frances Johnson, Nov. 1, 1935.
†Succeeded by Alice Lieder, April 1, 1935

In Memoriam

DR. DOUGLAS F. WOOD

Dr. Wood, M. D., C. M., F.A.C.S., served as ophthalmologist at the Minnesota School for the Blind for some thirty years up until 1932. During that time he gave freely of his rich experience. His inestimable service to the Minnesota School for the Blind was recognized in a memorial service conducted by Dr. F. F. Kramer in the school auditorium. Dr. Wood identified himself closely with sight-saving work in the Twin Cities. He was born December 10, 1874, and died February 9, 1935. His father, Dr. George Weston Wood, served many years as the school physician. The present dentist, Dr. Geo. W. Wood, is a brother of Dr. Douglas Wood.

AUGUSTA SCHEWE

Miss Augusta Schewe, whose years of service as sewing teacher and housemother at the Minnesota School for the Blind, extended from October, 1899, to March 17th, 1935, was born June 13, 1868 and died August 4, 1935. A memorial service was conducted October 13, 1935, in the school auditorium. Miss Schewe's thirty-six years of quiet and gracious service will long be remembered by grateful friends.

Superintendent's Report

To the Members of the State Board of Control:

I respectfully submit the following report of the Minnesota School for the Blind for the biennium, ending June 30, 1936.

ATTENDANCE

During the biennium 151 pupils were enrolled in the regular school; of this number 55 were new admissions. The average attendance for the school year 1934-1935 was 112; for the school year 1935-1936, 124. In addition to those graduating, eight pupils did not return after the school year, 1934-1935; and nine pupils, after the school year 1935-1936.

GRADUATES

Four girls were graduated from our high school on May 29, 1935, and two boys and two girls on May 28, 1936. They are:

Marie Bjornstad, Hartland, Freeborn County;
Eva Fischer, Sleepy Eye, Brown County;
Nellie Gardner, Pillager, Cass County;
Irene Wood, Minneapolis, Hennepin County;

Germaine Fuller, Mankato, Blue Earth County;
Jacob Imberg, Gilbert, St. Louis County;
Herman Ische, Hamburg, Carver County;
Lillian Nikula, Hibbing, St. Louis County.

AWARDS

The Dr. Dow Scholarship awards were given the following for the school year, 1934-1935: Academic—Marie Bjornstad, Nellie Gardner, Lorraine Hill, and Donald Hunder. Music—Joseph Villeburn, Elma Siren, Minetta Johnson, and Lawrence Elias. Industrial—Herman Ische and Irene Wood.

For the school year, 1935-1936: Academic—Lorraine Hill, Donald Hunder, Hazel Rummell, and Alma Slagter. Music—Charles Larson, Myrtle Kiel, Fred Swenson, and Clyde Olson. Industrial—Elma Siren and Jacob Imberg.

Awards for efficiency and effort in band and orchestra were given to Vernon Dery, Lawrence Elias, Joseph Hanzal, Eva Helmon, Herman Ische, Ogden Jacobs, Clarence Johnson, Russell Maki, Perry Nygaard, Gordon Olson, Frederick Swenson and Bennie Ystenes.

Donald Dedon, Dwayne Seaver, Leroy Jorgenson, Robert Latvala, Robert Gullberg, and James Marshall.

Piano tuning certificates were awarded to Perry Nygaard and Herman Ische.

Winners of athletic awards, based on performance in National Schools for the Blind telegraphic track meets were: 1934-1935, Minetta Johnson, Eva Fischer, Agnes Benais, Alex Neal, Russell Maki, Leonard Battalion, Harris Anderson, and Thomas Rode.

1935-36, Margaret Lueck, Lillian Vanderwerf, Inez Lyon, Barbara Anderson, Alex Neal, Phillip Imberg, Clyde Olson, Thomas Rode, and Myron Pulkrabek.

ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT

Our braille and sight-conservation departments parallel each other and are patterned after the curricula used in the public schools of the state. The school's range of classes include the pre-primary department, the eight elementary grades and four years of high school. Graduates from our high school department may enter the University of Minnesota, and the colleges of the state without entrance examinations.

Braille students, that is, boys and girls who read with their fingers, made up 67% of the student body during the school year 1934-1935; 52% of those attending in 1935-1936 used braille. The change in percentages was due to the fact that so many of the new admissions for the second-named school year were "sight-savers."

The braille group consists of children who are totally blind or whose vision is so defective that they cannot read print, no matter how large it is. Generally speaking, the vision of boys and girls in the sight-conservation department is 20/200. Text books for these are printed in 18 to 24 point type, the size of the average one-column newspaper headline. The ophthalmologist's advice concerning the care of students' eyes and the amount of print reading allowed is carefully followed.

Because of the lack of "clear type" text books beyond the fifth grade, pupils at our school are, of necessity, more or less dependent on braille as they progress. There is a possibility, however, that the American Printing House for the Blind at Louisville, Kentucky, will undertake the printing of large type text books so that sight-conservation children will have them until they have finished high school.

INDUSTRIAL DEPARTMENT

In this department our children are taught first of all to make deft use of their hands. In the second place, every effort is made to teach handicrafts and trades that will make our students self-supporting or partially self-supporting at least. It has been estimated that about 15% of the blind are employable.

The boys are taught piano tuning and repair, upholstering, mattress making, woodwork, rug weaving, basket making, chair caning, tennis racket restringing, hammock and net weaving, bathmat making. The girls are taught plain, fancy, hand and machine sewing, chair caning, basket making, carpet, rug and art loom weaving, upholstering and bathmat making.

MUSIC DEPARTMENT

As soon as our children have finished the third grade, or at about the age of ten, they are given individual instruction, especially on the piano. Instruction on the pipe organ, violin and other band and orchestra instruments follow, providing the pupil shows proficiency. Individual and group instruction in voice is also given, the latter through glee clubs. The school has an excellent orchestra and band; these organizations give several concerts in the state each spring, as well as an annual concert in the school auditorium. Recitals of various kinds are the order of the day in the spring.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Even though the school has no gymnasium of its own, a thoroughgoing program of physical education is carried on. When convenient, the gymnasium at the School for the Deaf is used; transportation is furnished by our own school bus. Every attempt is made to give our boys and girls a superior physical education. During the past school year, the Danish system of physical culture was introduced. The value of this system in a school for the blind was shown in the spring exhibition, which featured calisthenics of various kinds, tumbling and folk dancing.

During the fall and spring months the school's well-equipped playgrounds are used. All of the outdoor gymnastic equipment near the East and West Cottages was re-located during the past summer so as to make for centralization of instruction. The 100 yard cinder track was widened and the grounds for the older boys enlarged. Plans are now

being made for the construction of a separate outdoor yard for the older girls; none had been provided for them before.

The Minnesota School for the Blind is a member of the National Athletic Association of schools for the blind and participates in its annual telegraphic track meets each spring.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Although religious instruction is not included in the curriculum of the school, still, every effort is made to provide boys and girls with religious instruction and training. This is secured through the assistance of three chaplains who come to the school every week and through the splendid cooperation of the churches in Faribault. The need of religious instruction is evidenced by the fact that a boy or girl, starting in our pre-primary department and continuing through the grades and high school, spends 117 months with us and only thirty-six months at home. Protestant and Catholic children are instructed on Saturday mornings by their respective chaplains. On Sunday morning a chaplain conducts a non-denominational service. Our thirty-five-passenger bus follows a Sunday morning schedule and brings our children to and from the churches in Faribault. A Sunday School for Protestant children is conducted by one of our chaplains at the Ephphatha Church.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Blind children need to be trained so that they can take their places in a sighted world in such a manner that they can enjoy many of the things that seeing people enjoy. That is why such emphasis is placed on physical education. Co-ordination of muscles is stressed so that pupils who might otherwise continue with a shuffling gait will walk relaxed and easily. Athletic contests further this program and show the surprising ability of the totally blind to compete with the partially seeing. A number of parties are arranged by officers and teachers for our boys and girls; these give, first of all, opportunities for relaxation and fun, and secondly, a chance to correct social mistakes. Dances for the older boys and girls teach poise and ease of manner. Our children are especially fond of theatre parties and picnics.

At the Minnesota School for the Blind we have a very successful Girl Scout Troop organized some years ago. This Troop has continued to do uniformly excellent work year by year. The organization is a bona

fide associate of the Girl Scouts of America and follows out its program thoroughly.

Each year suitable lectures and musical entertainments are purchased. For the school year 1936-1937 there will be a lecture by a deep-sea diver, a talk on gyroscopes and their demonstration, and a concert by a negro quartet.

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

During the biennium just past, the hospital on the school campus was remodelled and equipped; it is in charge of a registered nurse. The first floor serves as a treatment room and dispensary; the second floor contains a dark room for eye examinations, an operating room and two wards with four beds in each. It is now possible to properly isolate contagious diseases.

Sickness during the past two years has been kept at a minimum. Contagion in 1934-1935 was held to a few mild cases of measles. During the school year 1935-1936, we had only half as many contagious cases as during the previous year; these were limited to chicken pox and two cases of mumps, one of which was contracted away from school during the Christmas vacation.

In the very near future we will be able to report a 100% coverage of the student body in the matter of giving the Mantoux test for tuberculosis and X-rays where necessary, in inoculating against diphtheria and in vaccinating against smallpox. Consent slips for the above are now secured from parents before new admissions arrive. All employes are also vaccinated and inoculated and given the Mantoux test as an added precaution against contagion. X-rays during the biennium showed negative results for all pupils and employes.

A number of tonsillectomies, needling operations for cataracts and an iridectomy were performed by Dr. J. H. Gammell of Minneapolis. Dr. Gammell also examined the eyes of all new admissions and made periodic examinations throughout the year. Dr. F. U. Davis, resident physician, answered readily all calls for services to pupils.

A more complete system of hospital and health records was inaugurated.

SUMMER SCHOOL

An eight-weeks' summer school is conducted for blind men and women, who are residents of the state. Attendance is limited to four summers. The entire industrial faculty remains during the summer. In addition to the industrial work taught, emphasis is placed on braille reading and typewriting. The only expense connected with the summer school is that for travel and personal needs. Board, room, and laundry are provided without charge.

During the summer school session of eight weeks for adults in 1935, forty-three men and six women attended; twenty-nine were new admissions. Forty men and eleven women attended the 1936 summer session; eighteen were new admissions.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The School for the Blind serves as a trustee for the higher educational aid fund, which the legislature appropriates for the specific purpose of giving financial help to blind students who continue their studies after high school. The amount available in recent years, namely $2,000 a year, has proven insufficient.

Blind students have done uniformly good work during the biennium at the University of Minnesota, Winona State Teachers College, St. Cloud State Teachers College, Hamline University, Macalester College, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Olaf College, Minneapolis School of Music, MacPhail School of Music and Miss Wood's Kindergarten School.

LIBRARY

Since the library at the Minnesota School for the Blind was designated a depository of the Library of Congress under the Pratt-Smoot Law some 500 books in braille have been added each year without cost to the State of Minnesota. There are now 14,530 volumes in our library, 1,021 having been added during the biennium. The circulation during the two-year period totaled 17,259 and represents an increase of more than 2,000 volumes over the previous biennium. The 396 readers, residing outside the school in Minnesota, North and South Dakota and Eastern Montana, have access to this library without cost to them. Books are sent through the mails without payment of postage. A catalogue and three annual supplements are available for braille readers.

With the introduction of the talking book, our library circulation has had a mushroom growth. In less than a year, after talking book records became more available, the circulation climbed to 10,255. Our collection of talking book records is being added to continually because Congress appropriates money for the manufacture and distribution of them through Library of Congress depositories. These records are available for blind readers who have talking book machines and have registered them with our library. Records are sent through the mail without charge.

Magazines in Braille, New York point, and Moon type are also loaned to blind readers.

CAUSES OF BLINDNESS

At the close of the biennium, covered in this report, Dr. C. E. Stanford, University of Minnesota Hospital, prepared a survey on the causes of blindness in Minnesota under the direction of Dr. Frank E. Burch, St. Paul. The records at the Minnesota School for the Blind for the past ten years were carefully examined. Following is the section of Dr. Burch's paper summing up the facts at our school.

"We have not, as yet, made mention of the causes of blindness in those admitted to the State School for the Blind. These causes have been studied in 353 cases, beginning with those students registered in the regular school session of 1926, and then including only each new admission up to and including the present term (1935-1936). Ophthalmia neonatorum* . . . constitutes 8.2% of all admissions; congenital syphilis, 11%; injuries, 10%; acute infectious diseases, 6.8%; congenital and hereditary causes, 52.4%. This last very large group is made up of the following: congenital cataracts, congenital glaucoma, retinitis pigmentosa, refractive errors (mostly myopia), ectopia lentis, albinism, aniridia, optic atrophy, defective globe, colobomata, chorio-retinal defects, nystagmus, and congenital anophthalmos.

"The number of admissions because of refractive error is far less than in our city sight saving schools. It will become much larger because it is the only means of providing sight saving education for the children in the country, and rural teachers urge it."

*During the biennium only three children or 1.92% were blind because of ophthalmia neonatorum; all were 14 years of age or more.

IMPROVEMENTS

During the biennium a number of improvements were made at the school. An electric transmission cable was laid to the State School and Colony; because of the lower rate paid, the saving to the State amounts to over $1,000 a year. A modern, 20,000 watt, totally indirect lighting system was installed in our classrooms. The refrigerators adjoining the school kitchen were completely rebuilt and new cooling units installed. The hospital was remodeled and modernized. All classrooms in Dow Hall were redecorated and the floors sanded and finished. All of the older girls' dormitories in North Wing and the younger girls' dormitories in Center Wing were redecorated. The dormitories on the third floor, South Wing, were painted. The two children's dining rooms, the employes' dining room, the school kitchen and two subkitchens and the auditorium were painted. All teachers' dormitories were redecorated.

RE-ARRANGEMENT OF CLASSROOMS

During the summer of 1935 it became decidedly apparent that added classrooms would have to be provided to meet the requirements imposed by an augmented enrollment. By that time, also, library space was at a premium and the principal had no office.

Accordingly, a chain of changes was started by moving the carpenter and paint shops from the industrial building to quarters adjoining the boiler room. Then, the weaving and basketry departments, formerly housed in Dow Hall, were moved into the industrial building. A little later the exhibit room was transferred from East Cottage to the Industrial Building.

After that, lower grade instruction was centralized in the basement of the South Wing of Dow Hall. The primary department was moved into the southeast room (where the history department had been). Where the primary department had been located (the old basketry room), the braille grade department was installed. The sight saving department took over the weaving room quarters.

On the first floor of Dow Hall, further changes were made so as to unify the arrangement of upper grades and high school classrooms. In the south wing the "special" class quarters were made into a reading room for the library. All text books were, furthermore, moved to the same floor in North Wing and housed in a part of the old hospital. A principal's office was arranged for in the new text book library.

The history department was moved into the former sight saving quarters and the "special" classroom moved to the former braille grade department in North Wing.

The net result, accomplished without the tearing out of any walls, added up to two more classrooms, a principal's office, a separate text book library, larger quarters for the regular braille library and the grouping together as separate units the industrial, lower grade, upper grade and high school classes.

ADDED DORMITORY SPACE

An increased enrollment has brought with it housing problems. Added rooms were secured in East Cottage (smaller boys) by cutting to a minimum the number of employes living there. The same was done in West Cottage (older boys).

Added room was made available in Center Wing (smaller girls) by taking over a teacher's room. A similar arrangement was effected in North Wing (older girls).

For the coming school year, 1936-1937, arrangements have been made so as to have children living in Faribault attend as day students. The enrollment is certain to reach 135. It would appear now that the number of applications for admission will increase rather than decrease. This does not represent an increase of blindness; it simply indicates that parents and teachers are realizing the advantages to be obtained from children attending our sight conservation classes.

A NEW LIGHTING SYSTEM

Following is a partial reprint of an article written by the Superintendent and published in the national magazine "The Outlook for the Blind" in October, 1935. It explains fully the new lighting system installed during the summer of 1935. The "new era of light" at the Minnesota School for the Blind has proven an invaluable aid.

"At first thought, one might be led to believe that illumination would play a negligible part at a school such as ours. We have, however, a large number of students who are able to use inkprint textbooks, even though their vision falls in the classification of 'industrially blind.'

"By means of our new indirect luminaries we have increased our classroom light efficiency by more than 2,000 percent. I know this to be a fact because I personally checked old and new lighting units by means of a light meter. Where formerly the average reading of artificial light in all our classrooms was only one foot-candle, one-fifth enough for even coarse work, now the average is twenty-three foot-candles. The last named figure brings the light available into the level of 'fine work and print'. This amount of artificial light supplements natural light so as to bring the level to the thirty-five foot-candle mark, which is the amount needed for people with defective vision. It is of interest to note that readings of natural light, taken one morning when the sun was shining, showed in practically every classroom minimums of five foot-candles and maximums of thirty-two foot-candles. Light decreased rapidly as the meter was moved from the windows.

"In planning our new system, we used the simple formula, given us by light engineers, of figuring five watts of light for each square foot of floor. Theoretically, this should have given us a reading of twenty-five foot-candles. To reach this goal, however, we found it necessary to wash our ceilings and walls and to apply three coats of the best semi-flat washable paint obtainable. Washing and painting increased our light efficiency an average of six foot-candles: the painted rooms have a light-reading of twenty-three foot-candles, unpainted rooms a reading of only seventeen foot-candles. Obviously, increased wattage and modern lighting units were not enough; paint was also needed.

"The new luminaries have oxidized aluminum reflectors, that throw the light from the inside frosted, double filament lamps against the ceiling. This produces a soft and diffused illumination, which is absolutely free from glare or shadow. Three-way switches make it possible for us to separate our 500-watt Mazda lamps into smaller units of 200 and 300 watts. Our classroom illumination divides itself as follows:

200-watt filament	11 foot-candles
300-watt filament	16 foot-candles
Above filaments added	23 foot-candles

Mention should be made here of our ceiling and wall colors, as they added to our light efficiency. In the course of this study we found that color reflections vary tremendously. Spanish blue, for example, a color we would not even consider, has an efficiency of only 7 percent as it

absorbs 93 percent of the light which strikes it. Our ceilings are now ivory and have a reflecting efficiency of about 80 percent. Our upper walls, painted a deeper ivory than the ceilings, have a light efficiency of about 75 percent; the lower walls of taupe reflect some 50 percent of the light striking them. By cutting through years' accumulations of dark varnish on our floors and by treating the clean maple with transparent sealers and finishers, we added greatly to the light content of our classrooms.

"Similar lighting units are being installed in our remodeled hospital, in the rooms of our industrial building, and in our music studios. Added units will be placed in all study rooms. (This has been done.)

"It is predicted that our new lighting system will prove a real addition to our sight-saving facilities. There is certain to be a lessening of eye strain. If we succeed in checking loss of vision in only one child, our investment will have been paid many times over."

A NEW CLASSROOM AND STUDY SCHEDULE

At the beginning of the 1935-1936 school year, the schedule of classes was re-arranged, so as to give pupils from one to two free periods a day. Compulsory evening study hours for all pupils were changed to "the quiet hour" with study recommended. Supervised evening study was made mandatory only for those who were failing in one or more subjects. Sight-saving students, however, were urged to complete classroom preparations by daylight, so as to avoid eye strain under artificial light. The end of the first year under the new schedule found members of the student body less tense and nervous and in better physical condition.

THE DIVISION FOR THE BLIND

The Division for the Blind, with offices in the State Administration Building, St. Paul, carries on the field work for the School. Prospective students are interviewed by the Division's representatives and a report sent to the Superintendent. The School for the Blind, in turn, furnishes the Division with records of its students. The undersigned takes this opportunity to thank Mr. M. I. Tynan, Supervisor, Division for the Blind, for his efficient and courteous assistance.

For the reader's information, it should be added that the Division for the Blind does the field work for the summer school, aids the adult blind of the state in securing employment, assists them in securing tools, appliances and supplies for their trades, gives care and relief to the indigent blind. The Division cooperates with the school in the advisement, training and placement of graduates.

A RECREATIONAL-INDUSTRIAL BUILDING

I respectfully recommend the building of a gymnasium as well as a new industrial building; added space for our fast growing library is also imperative. A building, housing the above departments, would take care of our most pressing needs. If necessary the present industrial building could later be used as a cottage for pupils.

CONCLUSION

It was with real pleasure that I took over the superintendency of the Minnesota School for the Blind in November, 1934. My predecessor, Mr. M. R. Veyle, turned over to me a school doing exceptional scholastic work and a plant which was in splendid condition.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my neighbors, Dr. J. M. Murdoch and Mr. Leonard M. Elstad, superintendents of the State School and Colony and the School for the Deaf, respectively, for their counsel. I wish to commend, also, the faithful and loyal service of all those employed at our school. Their intelligent cooperation has meant a great deal to me.

I am deeply indebted to you, the honored members of the State Board of Control; thank you for your unfailing support and encouragement.

Respectfully submitted,

J. C. Lysen,

Superintendent.